PROCEEDINGS OF THE MADRAS LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Official Report.

First Session of the Second Council under the Government of India Act, 1919.

VOLUME XVI.

Tuesday, 5th February 1924.

The House met in the Council Chamber, Fort St. George, at 11 o'clock.

I

NEW PRESIDENT.

The hon. Diwan Bahadur Lewis Dominic Swamikannu Pillai Avargal, C.I.E., I.S.O., the newly appointed President, took the prescribed oath of allegiance to the Crown and took his seat in the Presidential Chair amidst applause.

The hon. Sir Charles Todhunter:—"Mr. President: Before we proceed with the business of the day, I ask your permission, on behalf of the Members of this House, to offer you our very sincere congratulations upon the high office for which you have been selected, not yet by the vote of the Members of this House themselves, but on their behalf by His Excellency the Governor.

"It is only a few short weeks since we made our farewells to our late President, when the whole House joined with me in appraising the qualities of the ideal Speaker and deciding that he had them in full measure. And having regard to all that was said on that occasion, I can understand that any one who takes his place will do so with a feeling that it will be an extraordinarily difficult place to fill.

"But I believe that I shall have the whole House with me when I say that out of the gentlemen available to fill his place no better choice could possibly have been made than that which has been made by His Excellency the Governor. You have already shown us that you possess many of those qualities—courage, industry, patience, sympathy and humour. You have ever been ready to help, and more ready to listen than to speak, and you have preserved an attitude of complete detachment from party politics. You have given much study to the securing of a complete mastery of the forms of the House, have a scrupulous regard to them, and will, I am sure, display a stern sense of justice in applying them. Nor can we forget your strenuous work on our behalf in the British House of Commons, where it has been said that you were so assiduous in your attendance in the particular corner you had chosen for yourself that you came to be regarded almost as part of the furniture of the building (laughter). I will refer only to one of the results. You came back resolved to teach us among other things, to make question time more lively. If one may judge by the number and the nature of the questions on the paper to-day, you have succeeded in this object beyond your and our wildest hopes or expectations.

[Sir Charles Todhunter] [5th February 1924

"And while I feel that I shall have the whole of the House with me in congratulating you on your accession to your great office, and in stating the belief that you will fulfil its many and difficult functions in the best possible manner, I feel also that I can assure you that you will have the assistance of all sections of the House in performing those functions, in maintaining its rights, privileges, honours and dignities, and in accepting and enforcing your rulings and supporting the authority which by common consent you will be exercising for the common good. I need not remind the House that the dignity of the Chair is the dignity of the House itself, and that the dignity, the respect and the honour in which it is held, is the foundation on which the respect and the authority of the Council itself must depend.

"Sir, in the times in which we live, your great office is encumbered by heavy and growing responsibilities, but it offers opportunities that are equally great, opportunities of building up the traditions and the conventions of a greater body than that over which you now preside. You enter upon it with the most heartfelt good will and the most sanguine hopes of the whole House and I feel sure that when the time comes for you to lay it down it will be said by common consent that you found foundations well and truly laid and have builded on them equally truly and equally well." (Applause.)

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL:—"Mr. President, I have very great pleasure to join my hon. Colleague in offering congratulations to you on this occasion of your assuming of the office of the President of this House. Sir, it is only the other day when we last met that we gave expression to our sense of appreciation of the successful career of Sir P. Rajagopalachariyar as the President of this Council. To-day you have been chosen to the high office. A better choice, I dare say, is impossible to think of. Your superior intellectuality, your high character and your study and your experience will enable you to carry on the duties appertaining to the high office with distinction. I have no doubt, Sir, that under your able guidance this House will have a brilliant career, and I am sure that you will maintain the excellent traditions which your worthy predecessor has established."

Rao Bahadur C. NATESA MUDALIYAR:—"Sir, Mr. President, may I request you to allow me to associate myself with the Leader of the House in offering my hearty congratulations on your elevation to the position of the President of this august body? Sir, the choice of His Excellency could not have fallen on a better person. I have been watching your career ever since you were the Latin Professor of the Presidency College—even then a reputed scholar. Since then you were dubbed an Indian Webster. Your erudition, your experience in the administration of the varied departments with which you were connected as a civil servant, your acquaintance with parliamentary procedure when you were in England recently, your knowledge of law, and, above all, the work you have been doing in this Legislative Department for the last three years, best fit you for the honour of the position you are occupying to-day. Sir, I hope you will zealously maintain the traditions left by your predecessor. I hope you will discharge your duties independent of and without caring for the frown or favour of even His Excellency or the Members of his Cabinet.

"Now, Sir, I request your permission to extend my congratulations to your Secretary. I learn, Sir, that Mr. R. V. Krishna Ayyar was brought into the Secretariat solely for his legal knowledge. I have been hearing of

him as an amiable and good-natured gentleman. My personal contact with him teaches me that the more one knows him the more one will love him. He is really an acquisition to this Council."

The hon. Sir CHARLES TODHUNTER :—" Hear, hear."

Rao Bahadur C. NATESA MUDALIYAR :—" Sir, let me also crave your indulgence to offer my congratulations to the newly appointed Assistant Secretary. Sir, this is a matter of personal gratification to me ; for, we are class-mates and intimate friends. But this title comes to him without equivalent remuneration. I hope the hon. the Finance Member will kindly look to it."

Rao Bahadur A. S. KRISHNA RAO PANTULU :—" Sir, I have great pleasure in associating myself with the hon. the Leader of the House and giving expression to our feelings of gratification on your appointment as the President of this Council. I have a hope that with the excellent precedent which has been set before you and the splendid opportunities you have had of working with our ex-President who distinguished himself so ably, it will be possible for you to lay the foundations of constitutional practice deeper and even show definite improvement in various directions. Let me also inform this House that I had an opportunity of working with our distinguished President, not as President of this Council, but as president of a district board. If I can recall to my memory the way in which he succeeded in satisfying the desires of almost all members concerned, if I can bear personal testimony to the fact that he did not give on any occasion any slightest offence to any one individual in the House, I am quite certain that with the increased opportunities he has had, he will be able to produce a much better and a marvellous record in this Council. Time will come when, at the close of his career, we shall be in a position to judge more of the work and offer our thanks for the distinguished services which are still in store for us.

" I believe I will be within my rights if I make a suggestion before I close, and it is this : that the chief and the only consideration which everyone will have is how far the rights and the privileges of the Members of this House are safeguarded. We have every hope and confidence that we are quite safe in your hands and we will come out much better in the future than in the past."

The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" I am sure hon. Members will understand me when I say that I am exceedingly indebted to the hon. the Leader of the House, to the hon. the Minister for Self-Government, to Mr. Natesa Mudaliyar and to the hon. Member for Nellore, Rao Bahadur A. S. Krishna Rao, for the very kind words with which they have welcomed me. It is hardly possible for me to say anything more because in the first place I have had no notice that these remarks were going to be made. I will avail myself, however, of this opportunity to say one thing. And that is in reply to the kind words that have been said with regard to my Secretary and my Assistant Secretary who are still less able than I am to speak for themselves. On their behalf as well as on my own I thank the hon. Members who have made such kind references to us."

II

POINT OF ORDER REGARDING THE HOLDING OF THE PRESENT MEETING OF THE COUNCIL.

Mr. S. SATYAMURTI :—" Sir, may I submit to your ruling a point of order ? My point is that this meeting is not properly convened, and I will give my